

April 21, 1998

Boyle, Jane

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Sent
AA

Ann Veneman
Secretary of Agriculture
California Department of Food and Agriculture
1220 N. Street, Suite 904
Sacramento, CA 95814
RE: Docket# TMD-94-00-2

+ thanked for
her response from
Gov. Pete Wilson
- CA -

Dear Secretary Veneman,

I was very upset to hear that the USDA has proposed national standards that would violate the essence of organic agriculture and food, yet would supercede all existing standards. I understand that the USDA is proposing to redefine organic foods to lower standards and allow foods that are genetically engineered, irradiated, factory-farmed, and grown on toxic sewage sludge. This is outrageous!

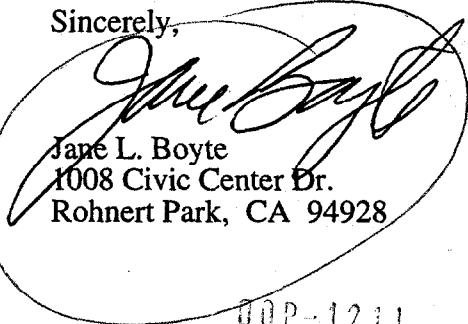
The USDA's proposed national organic rules have over 60 provisions that would change or dismantle current safeguards and established organic practices which have been developed over the years by organic farmers, manufacturers and consumers who came to a consensus. That consensus resulted in the Organic Food Production Act of the 1990 Farm Bill which called for the formation of the National Organic Standards Board. The intent of the law was to give the NOSB sole authority to place items on the National List of allowed synthetic materials. The Secretary of the USDA was granted the authority to remove items, not to add to it.

Why is the USDA going totally against the recommendations of the NOSB! This is insane. I demand as a consumer, tax-payer, and American citizen that you listen to me and others who will make their voices heard. Count me as someone who wants to be able to choose what I eat and serve my family. I don't always buy organic, but do whenever possible. I want to be able to feel safe about the foods I eat and be assured that the labeling is accurate and truthful. I don't want any genetically engineered substances in my food (I consider the whole subject of genetic engineering frightening and out-of-control already), I don't want to eat food grown on sewage sludge that may have heavy metals or toxins in it and I certainly don't want my food treated or processed using irradiation. I also want animals to be treated as humanely as possible and I want our nation to encourage and support the small farmer, the certifiers of organic practices and the processors of organic foods and products. Why do we have to discourage enterprising people who want to make choices available. There will always be big business and giant conglomerate farming enterprises. There is enough to go around.

It is our right as consumers and American citizens to be confident in our choice of buying clean, sustainably grown foods and to trust the "organic" label. As a California resident, I ask that the CDFA, as my representative, strongly urge the USDA to fully adopt all of the recommendations of the National Organic Standards Board, or at the very least, object to the USDA's proposed rules, and insist that they withdraw them immediately and propose for public comment instead, rules that reflect the true values of organic - such as those in OFPA, and the rules drafted through seven years of hard work by the official NOSB. After all, we must not think only of ourselves, but of the generations to come. Do we really want a future that contains no choice in the food we buy? To have to worry about the long term effects of genetically engineered substances unleashed into the food chain? Do you want that?

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,


Jane L. Boyle
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cc:

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